

First Report to the Tippecanoe County Council

Presented by the Efficiency Committee

August 10, 2004

Introduction

The Efficiency Committee began in March 2004 as a result of a County Council Meeting during which Council Members discussed the need for increased efficiency as a result of limited funding and on-going economic hardship. After considering the charge from the Council, KD Benson asked several department heads if they would serve on a committee to examine the issues the Council raised.

The Tippecanoe County Efficiency Committee is composed of: KD Benson, Jennifer Weston, Linda Phillips, Nancy Moore, Tracy Brown, Sallie Fahey, Diane Hawkins, Rebecca Humphrey, and Ron Cripe. Judge Daniel attended some early meetings but concluded that the efforts of the Courts would be better directed toward study of issues exclusive to the Courts.

As the committee considered the objective, the group quickly determined that much work to improve efficiency could be accomplished without the use of expensive outside consultants. While it might still be desirable to hire a consultant at a future point, there was considerable work to be accomplished first. The group met weekly to discuss and evaluate efficiency within county government. The committee's first task was to establish the goals. The following were identified:

1. To define efficiency as it relates to county government.
2. To recommend if/when a consultant should be hired to study efficiency in the county.
3. To recommend and implement ways to improve efficiency, knowledge and relationships within the county.
4. To identify redundancies and work flow processes and recommend if a consultant is needed.
5. To identify ways to improve efficiency through technology.
6. To review compensation structures and make recommendations.
7. To review and recommend outsourcing/contracting possibilities to increase efficiency.
8. To serve as a recommending body to the County Council and the County Commissioners on efficiency in county government.

As a first step, the efficiency committee defined efficiency as: *Efficiency is the ratio of total quality output to input.*

First Recommendation to the Council

As a result of reviewing definitions for efficiency, the Committee realized the need for reviewing and rewriting the County's Mission Statement. The current mission statement states:

Tippecanoe County Government will provide responsive, high-quality services that enhance and maintain self-sufficiency, personal safety, economic opportunity, mutual respect and quality of life for present and future generations.

This mission statement as adopted March 12, 2002, does not reference the need for efficiency in meeting multiple needs and demands, nor does it suggest to outsiders that high-quality services will be provided in a cost-effective manner. *The Efficiency Committee's first recommendation is to review and rewrite the County Mission Statement to reflect that providing services efficiently is a priority.*

Outreach to all County Department Heads and Appointed Officials

To expand discussions about efficiency, members of the committee met with all department heads and appointed officials on a one on one basis to assess buy-in with regard to evaluating and improving efficiency. During these individual face-to-face meetings, an explanation of the background and purpose of the Efficiency Committee was provided with a request to each department head and appointed official to aid in evaluating efficiency. All department heads and appointed officials reported that they desire to aid in evaluating and improving efficiency.

At the June 9, 2004, Department Head Meeting, break-out groups were identified and each group followed a set agenda. The groups were as follows: Justice; Support Services; Permits and Planning; Property Records/Tax and Assessing; and Small Stand Alones.

Each group was asked to identify the following:

1. List Common Activities Among Your Small Groups
2. Identify and Generate a List of Items Purchased on a Regular Basis
3. Identify and List Regulations/Deadlines/Laws that Govern Your Departments – List Both Those that Enable Work and Those that may Prevent Efficiency
4. Identify and List Your Small Group's Three to Five Areas of Overlap/Duplication
5. Identify and List Your Small Group's Three to Five Top Choices for Specific/Fixable Problems that Individuals in Your Group Face

Most groups were able to answer these questions in the allowable time frame; others agreed to meet on their own within 30 days. All groups, lead by an Efficiency Committee member, were to submit a written report of their responses. Please see Exhibit A for a chart of group responses.

Prioritization of Projects

The Efficiency Committee's next step was to prioritize the list of responses resulting from the department head outreach. The projects named below are based on specific/fixable problems and possible solutions. Prioritizing is based on short-term and long-term timeframe to address, if not implement, with long-term being six months to one year.

Short-Term Major Projects:

- Revamp Website
- Receive and Transmit Clerk's Tax Warrants Electronically
- Establish Merit Pay
- Combine Purchasing with the City of Lafayette
- Begin Pilot Program for Paperless Courts

Short-Term Minor Projects:

- Show Vacation, Sick Leave and Other Accruals on Paychecks
- Create a One-Sided Claim Form
- Place Employee Suggestion Boxes at All Facilities
- Encourage Networking Among Employees with Similar Jobs

Long-Term Major Projects

- Storage of Usable and Disposable Items
- Eliminate Duplication Between Proslink and Courtview
- Centralize Jury Pool
- Upgrade Tax/Assess Software
- Receive and Transmit Sheriff's Tax Warrants Electronically

- Centralize Purchasing and Payables Countywide
- Eliminate Duplication in Mapping
- Coordinate Building Inspections and Assessor's Field Work
- Combine Assessors' Offices
- Create a Pool of Floating Employees
- Establish a Document Management System

Long-Term Minor Projects

- Establish a Training Program
- Create User-Friendly Directories for Tippecanoe County Office Building and Courthouse

Following is a more specific description of some current county projects and how they are expected to promote efficiency.

County "Leadership Lafayette" Program

In a partnership training program with Leadership Lafayette, department heads will learn to trust and work together in an interactive environment that teaches learning/working styles, communication, conflict management, problem solving and ethics. This training, geared toward government situations, will be an integral part of the efficiency initiative to empower department heads to work together and streamline workflow processes.

Website Revamp

A website team has begun negotiations to revamp the current website, eventually adding more functionality and a consistent look and feel. An increase in usage of above the average 2000 hits/day supports the county's mission to "provide high quality services that enhance and maintain self-sufficiency." Providing self-service resources to the constituents in the long run should, in the long run, decrease the labor demands upon the departments. As a part of this, the Clerk's Office will accept credit cards for payment of traffic tickets on the web site.

Software

Two of the county's larger departments are seeking ways to eliminate data entry duplication through the purchase of software. It is important to note that some software "replacements" may not mean that a position can be eliminated—in most cases it may mean that department responsibilities are re-organized to improve efficiency and

customer service in the long run. In addition, for public purposes, the best case for eliminating positions is by attrition.

Purchasing

As the suggestion for centralized purchasing becomes more of a reality, the Commissioners see several models from which to choose. One in particular, similar to that of South Bend and St. Joe County, calls for the City of Lafayette and Tippecanoe County to combine purchasing efforts. Rather than add a third purchasing manager to the community, the County can utilize the expertise of the City's manager. In turn, the City too will benefit from adding our quantities for bulk discounts.

Over the next one to two years, the City and County will investigate streamlined procurement with several commodities, developing internal procedures to comply with State Board of Accounts, and to eventually include Purdue and/or the City of West Lafayette. It is important to note that many of the county's purchases—fuel, paper, copiers, insurance, etc—are already centralized. Internal measures can be taken for improvement, however, new issues such as storage of supplies, logging and tracking inventory and cost allocation of expenses arise.

Merit Pay

Included with this report is a Merit Pay Proposal for year 2005. It would allow for up to one percent, in addition to COLA, of an individual's salary to be earned in the form of a lump sum, one-time payment, based on performance of communicated and expected outcomes. Department heads, including judges, may make allocations based on written evaluations and overall compliance with the plan guidelines. This plan should be evaluated annually as expected outcomes are likely to change. The Committee believes that to provide "responsive, high-quality services, for present and future generations", the County must be willing to reward outstanding performers and provide incentives to promote efficiency. The Efficiency Committee hopes that this plan will set new standards for performance across county government

Document Management and Archiving

The county currently owns the technology necessary to eliminate large amounts of the paper currently produced, particularly in the Courts. Not only is there a huge annual output for paper and toner, there are significant labor costs to pull and refile documents. The new IV-D Court and the Forensic Diversion programs are currently on track to go "paperless." This pilot project involves the creation, approval, archiving and distribution of court records in an electronic format. The only paper copies created would be those distributed to defendants and counsel. While this pilot project is small—only about 500 cases annually in the IV-Court and about 80 cases in Forensic Diversion – if it is successful, the potential savings are enormous.

Other Recommendations to Commissioners/Council

Training

County government as a whole has not yet come to grips with the problem of job requirements outpacing the skills of the employees who occupy those positions. In most

departments there are employees with long service and excellent institutional knowledge but inadequate computer skills. A department head in this position is faced with three choices:

1. Keep the employee and live with the inefficiencies.
2. Send the employee for training.
3. Terminate the employee and hire someone with the necessary skills.

Most supervisors choose option #1 as option #3 is very difficult in many ways. The County Council has made option #2 virtually impossible, as training funds are generally the first items to be cut in a difficult budget year.

The Council needs to take care in understanding that monies spent on training are generally quickly recouped in improved efficiency. Training is not necessarily monies spent on sending people to conferences. (Some conferences are good opportunities for learning but regrettably sometimes people perceived conferences as not being strictly business.)

We recommend a greater investment in the type of training that is available locally. Training of this type might include hiring a consultant to teach department heads how to do employee evaluations. It might include sending some employees to the classes run by Ivy Tech in computer programs like Word, Excel and Access. It might be bringing in trainers in the case management software to be certain that we are using all of the capabilities of this enormous investment.

Part-Time Employees

Encourage department heads to consider greater use of part-time employees. This option would require some commitment on the part of the Council not to reduce the part-time salary line. A department head shared with us that they would cheerfully eliminate a full time position which costs the county about \$39,000 in salary and benefits, if they would be assured that they could keep \$24,000 of that in part-time monies as the department would greatly benefit from being able to schedule more help at the rush times. Previous experiences in the budget cycle had left them reluctant to make that obvious improvement in efficiency for fear that the funding would not be forthcoming from year to year. As they pointed out, under the current system they were better off with an expensive marginal full time employee than take the chance that they would have no employee.

Investment in Technology

Many of the potential savings for departments will require a greater use of technology. It is important to realize that some department level savings will be offset by increased demands for support from the MITS department. It may be necessary to provide additional resources in both equipment and staff to provide the support necessary to be more efficient in using technology.

Conclusion of Report and Next Steps of Efficiency Committee

This is not our final report. The committee intends to keep working on the issues we have identified. Some of the projects will require funding to progress, others may require an outside consultant to evaluate work flows and recommend a working structure. We will see several of the short-term projects implemented within the next few months and will know by this time next year whether we have made any impact.

It was apparent in speaking with the department heads that they were eager and willing to work together and make changes to improve government. While not all of the changes will produce a reduction in expense, the changes will improve service to citizens. For some of our recommended changes the economic benefit is small, but at least the county will have taken that first step towards the goals defined by the committee.

We would like the Commissioners and Council to note that we will include the Courts in this process as it continues. Many of the Judges have expressed a desire to become more efficient but feel that major efforts in that direction should wait until a decision has been made as to the feasibility of a court administrator. When ideas for efficiency have been presented to them, Judges have generally been very receptive.

The recommendations suggested in this report--review/rewrite the mission statement, support greater investment in training and technology, and use more part-time employees--all require strong support from both the Commissioners and the Council. This support should be publicly made both fiscally and verbally. It is our hope that the Council and Commissioners will give careful and serious consideration to the recommendations in this report and provide the support necessary to continue to provide responsive, high-quality services to the citizens of Tippecanoe County.

Respectfully,



KD Benson



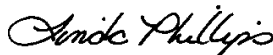
Nancy Moore



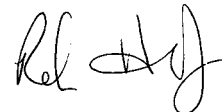
Sallie Dell Fahey



Ron Cripe



Linda Phillips



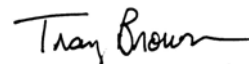
Rebecca Humphrey



Diane Hawkins



Jennifer Weston



Tracy Brown

cc: Commissioners 8/10, Department Heads 8/11